Pipes's Partner

No study of daniel pipes would be complete without a few words about the trenchant Martin Kramer, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and former editor of Pipes's *Middle East Quarterly,* who earned his undergraduate and doctoral degrees from Princeton, where he studied with Dodge professor (now emeritus) Bernard Lewis. For both Kramer and Pipes, Lewis is the greatest twentieth-century representative of the group of Jewish scholars who "played a key role in the development of an objective, nonpolemical, and positive evaluation of Islamic civilization," to use Lewis's own words, someone far above what Pipes calls the "postmodern practice of stuffing the complexities of political science and history into bottles labeled race, gender, and class" characterizing the current field.

In his 2001 book, *Ivory Towers on Sand,* Kramer launches a withering attack on the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), asserting that there were acknowledged problems with competency and standards from its very inception, in 1966—indeed, as far back as 1955, when Sir Hamilton Gibb was brought in to head the new Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard. Gibb, who "had wanted to bring Oriental studies and the social sciences together," later lamented:

> ...it was not long before I realized how inchoate, indeed how naïve, all my previous ideas had been, in face of the actual problems involved in developing a programme of area studies that could stand up to the high standards demanded by the Harvard Faculty—and equally so to the best academic standards in this country.

"To speak plainly," said Gibb, "there just are not yet enough fully-qualified specialists in any of the required fields to go round." "When Gibb departed in 1964," writes Kramer, "Harvard's center nearly folded, and for years it relied upon visiting faculty. Harvard tolerated its Middle East center (it brought in money), but never respected it."

It was the Arab-Israeli conflict in June 1967 that ignited what Kramer describes as the deepening politicization, the substitution of indoctrination for scholarship, and the Arab-Israel obsession that debilitated MESA. William Brinner, a Berkeley historian, saw it, and warned in his 1970 presidential address: "We do not seek an end to controversy, but we must realize that the price we will pay for political involvement is the destruction of this young Association and the disappearance of a precious meeting place of ideas." And in 1974, the University of Chicago's Leonard Binder, in *his* presidential address to MESA, cautioned: "Some day peace may break out, and then people will cease to be willing to pay us to tell them what they want to hear. What will we then do if we have no scholarly standing?"

But the *coup de grâce* for Middle Eastern studies, Kramer asserts, was delivered by Edward Said, the late Palestinian-American critic and University Professor and professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia, in his 1978 book *Orientalism.* Said, writes Kramer,

> situated the Palestinians in a much wider context. They were but the latest victims of a deep-seated prejudice against the Arabs, Islam, and the East more generally—a prejudice so systematic and coherent that it deserved to be described as "Orientalism," the intellectual and moral equivalent of anti-Semitism. Until Said, orientalism was generally understood to refer to academic Oriental studies in the older, European tradition....Said resurrected and resemanticized the term, defining it as a supremacist ideology of difference, articulated in the West to justify its dominion over the East.

"The decadence that pervades Middle Eastern studies today," wrote Kramer, "the complete subservience to trendy politics, and the unlikelihood that the field might ever again produce a hero of high culture—all this is owed to Edward Said."

It didn't take long for "Orientalist" to become a nasty word in Middle Eastern studies circles, as, for example, when Said himself, writing in *Counterpunch* in June 2003, referred to "Neanderthal publicists and Orientalists like Bernard Lewis and Daniel Pipes." To which Pipes responded a day or two later, "How impressive to be called an Orientalist by the person who transformed this honorable old term into an insult."

He has even set pen to paper against the USIP itself, which last March, over his "strenuous objections," cosponsored a workshop with the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy—"a radical Islamic group," according to Pipes, one of whose fellows is Kamran Bokhari, who, he says, "served for years as the North American spokesman for Al-Muhajiroun, perhaps the most extreme Islamist group operating in the West." Another invited guest was Muzammil Siddiqi, "who until November 2001 was president of the Islamic Society of North America, a Wahhabi front group." Pipes did not attend and went public in a column in the *New York Sun.*

For people like pipes, bluntness trumps diplomacy. Khaleel Mohammed, assistant professor of religious studies at San Diego State University, says he has the same problem. In an e-mail about Pipes, he writes, "I feel...that his undiplomatic language will cause angry reaction. I wrote DP about this, and he was kind enough to ask me how could he say things differently, given the material he deals with. I had no answer, since I am afraid that I belong to the same category." For such people, words mean what they are supposed to mean. Pipes objects to the phrase "war on terrorism," for example. "Terrorism is a tactic," he says. "You don't go to war against a tactic. We must be specific: we are at war with militant Islam, not 'terrorism.'" Pipes hammered at this point for almost three years. Recently, the 9/11 Commission issued its report and virtually echoed his words. The enemy, it said, is "Islamist terrorism...not just 'terrorism,' some generic evil."

Then there was the brouhaha about the word "jihad" in a Harvard student's graduation speech in 2002. To many of Pipes's admirers, this was a windmill that didn't need tilting at. But he remains adamant.

The news that senior Zayed Yasin had been chosen to deliver a Commencement address entitled "My American Jihad" barely nine months after September 11 prompted Pipes to write: "Imag-